

## The Milwaukee Parental Choice

**Program** allows students who reside in the City of Milwaukee to attend any participating private school if certain eligibility criteria are met. The private school, on behalf of the pupil's parent or guardian, receives a state aid payment for each eligible student. Contact the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for the list of schools participating in the program. You may also access the program's webpage at: [dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice.html](http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice.html).

## Payment of Allowable Fees

A private school may charge a Choice student reasonable fees for personal items such as towels, gym clothes or uniforms, social and extracurricular activities if the activity is not a part of the required curriculum, musical instruments, meals, and high school classes not required or credited for graduation. A Choice student cannot be charged fees for registration or application to the Choice program, books, teacher salaries, buildings, maintenance, equipment, computers, or transportation if required to be provided or reimbursed by the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).

## Payment of Tuition – Grades 9-12

A private school may, in addition to the state aid payment it receives, charge a Choice student tuition in an amount determined by the school if both of the following apply: (a) the student is in grades 9 through 12; and (b) the family income of the student exceeds 220% of the federal poverty level as shown in the table below. If the child's parents/legal guardians are married their income is reduced by \$7,000 when determining income for tuition purposes.

### 220% of the Federal Poverty Level 2012-13 Maximum

Family Size	Yearly Income
1	\$24,939
2	\$33,688
3	\$42,437
4	\$51,186

For each additional member add \$8,749.

## Special Education Services

A Choice school may not discriminate against a child with special needs during the admissions process or elsewhere. However, as a private school, the Choice school is only required to offer those services to assist students with special needs that it can provide with minor adjustments. Parents should contact the public school district in which the private school is located for more information on the services provided to children with special needs enrolled in the public schools and the lesser services that school district provides those children enrolled in private schools.

## Student Eligibility

Students in grades kindergarten through 12 residing in the City of Milwaukee may apply for the Choice program at a participating private school during a period the school is accepting Choice applications. Students new to the program must also meet the income requirements. To qualify for the program in the 2012-13 school year, a new student must reside in Milwaukee and have a family income equal to or less than 300% of the federal poverty level income limits shown below. If the child's parents/legal guardians are married their income is reduced by \$7,000 when determining income eligibility for the program.

### 300% of the Federal Poverty Level 2012-13 Maximum

Family Size	Yearly Income
1	\$34,008
2	\$45,939
3	\$57,870
4	\$69,801

For each additional member add \$11,931.

All students must apply each year and provide documentation that they reside in the City of Milwaukee. Students continuing in the program or students that were on the waiting list at a choice school in the prior year are not required to provide income documentation.

## How to Apply

The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program Student Application is used to apply to a private school participating under this program. This form may be obtained from the private school the pupil wishes to attend, downloaded from the program's web page at: [dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice.html](http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice.html) or by contacting DPI directly. The student's parent or guardian must **submit an application directly to a participating private Choice school** during the school's open application period(s). Each Choice school decides which of the open application period(s) listed below it will accept Choice student applications. Applicants are required to submit the

### Open Application Periods

February 1 – February 20  
March 1 – March 20  
April 1 – April 20  
May 1 – May 20  
June 1 – June 20  
July 1 – July 20  
August 1 – August 20  
September 1 – September 14  
October 1 – October 20  
(for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester participation only)  
November 1 – November 20  
(for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester participation only)  
December 1 – January 7  
(for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester participation only)

Choice application and proof of eligibility only during a school's open application period(s). Any application received outside a school's designated open application period(s) or not completed by the end of the specific application period will be considered ineligible. Parents are encouraged to apply during the school's earliest open

application period. A listing of the open application period(s) in which each school will participate in may be obtained from the program's website at: [dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice.html](http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice.html) or by contacting DPI directly.

If a private Choice school receives applications from more eligible students than it has Choice seats available, selection of students will be determined on a random basis. **In other words, the school cannot use grades, test scores, or other factors besides eligibility for the program in admitting Choice students.** However, preference may be given to Choice students already attending the school and their siblings. **It is recommended that parents keep in touch with the school to receive the latest information.** Schools must notify parents within 60 days of receiving the application of admission or non-admission to the Choice program at the school.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q.1 Can the Choice school require fundraising and school service of the Choice parent?**

**A.1** A school may not impose any penalties on a parent or child in the Choice program for failure to engage in fundraising (which would include any required service to the school).

### **Q.2 Is transportation available in the Choice program?**

**A.2** A private Choice school is not required to provide transportation to Choice students. If the school chooses to provide transportation, a fee may be charged. In some cases, MPS will provide transportation or pay the parent a certain amount for their transportation costs through a contract. Check directly with the private school you plan to attend or MPS.

### **Q.3 Can I enroll my child in a Choice school after the school year begins? Can my child transfer to another Choice school in the middle of the school year?**

**A.3** A private Choice school may enroll new students into the Choice program if the school has a slot available and the school has established open application periods. Furthermore, a child may apply to the Choice program at more than one private school at the same time. A student application must be filled out (and submitted directly to the school) for each Choice school, either to continue from one year to the next, transfer from one school to another or to enroll in the Choice program for the first time.

### **Q.4 How does the payment process work?**

**A.4** The state issues payments to the school where the child is enrolled in the Choice program (a check in September and November based on student attendance on the 3rd Friday in September and a check in February and May based on student attendance the 2nd Friday in January.)

### **Q.5 Is a child in the Choice program at a private religious school required to participate in religious activities or instruction?**

**A.5** No. If a Choice student's parent or guardian submits to the student's teacher or the school's principal a written request that the student be excused from any religious activity, the teacher and school must honor that request.

### **Q.6 Are there statutory procedures regarding student suspensions and expulsions that a private Choice school is required to follow?**

**A.6** Yes. State law requires private Choice schools to have procedures in place regarding student suspensions and expulsions. Parents should ask the Choice school they are considering for their child to provide a copy of the procedures the school has in place for imposition of or appeal of suspensions or expulsions.

#### **For more information contact:**

Private School Choice Programs  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
P.O. Box 7841  
Madison, WI 53707-7841  
Toll-free: 888-245-2732, ext. 3  
Web site: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sms/choice.html>



2012-13

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**2012-13 School Year**

## **The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program**

**Information for Parents**

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent